Subjectivity and Objectivity in Deciding Aesthetic Value

Definitions of art are important because they affect the way people judge the value of works of art.

These ideas fall into two categories:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Objectivism | Subjectivism |
| * Believe that certain qualities or reasons are contained in the art object itself.   + Their judgment of art is based on how effectively these qualities are arranged according to the rules of composition.   + Perceiver’s feelings are NOT considered   + “innate beauty” * Kant and others elaborated on “simple objectivism.”- sophisticated objectivism   + if the feelings come from the form’s ability to stimulate free play in the imagination, the judgment is universally accepted.   + Aesthetic judgments are based on universal principles that everyone applies when in a purely reflective state. | * Simple subjectivism focuses on the amount of pleasure a work of art arouses in the perceiver.   + Aesthetic judgments have nothing to do with the objective qualities of an object.   + Judgments depend solely on the emotions evoked by the object. * Sophisticated subjectivism builds on the simple subjectivist view. They support the objectivist idea that aesthetic judgment depend on how well an art object conforms to the aesthetic standards or rules.   + They add however, that not everyone is capable of making aesthetic judgments. Some people are unable to discriminate among objects.   + Universal acceptance of aesthetic judgments = impossible. |

*“Beauty is no quality in the things themselves: it exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty.”*

*-****David Hume*** supporter of sophisticated subjectivity.

Hume wrote that judgments of beauty and deformity are not based on fact or opinion, but originate in the sentiment of the observer.

He also argued that some universal qualities of art object appear to produce similar aesthetic judgments in people who are qualified to make judgments. These qualities are:

* consistency and uniformity of the whole
* how well the object achieves its purpose
* variety
* clarity of conception
* accuracy of imitation

Moral value and Aesthetic value

Plato:

* Art is anything BUT autonomous.
* Art should be judged according to three non-aesthetic criteria: its truthfulness, morality, and psychological benefit.
* Art should be censored if it does not meet the standards of good taste.

Kant:

* Believed that art is autonomous and cannot be judged in relation to what it ought to be, he also said that that people do link art and morality.
  + He noted that people can understand aesthetic experiences only by relating them to their moral natures.
  + Art is beautiful because of the way people view it, it’s a sensory experience.
* Argued that aesthetic experiences that include the contemplation of beauty in art and nature link the rational, morally good parts of human nature with the sensory part.
* Argued that aesthetic judgments should be universally accepted.

Schiller:

* Agreed with Kant but with one major difference: he said that aesthetic experience is necessary if people are to achieve moral goodness. Both Kant and Schiller argued that it is impossible to understand the aesthetic without taking into account the moral.

forgeries and artistic value

Forgeries are works of art that have been created to deliberately mislead perceivers. Philosophers still have questions about this:

* Does forgery have artistic value?
* Is forgery of less value than the original?

Beardsley:

* Believes that the value of forgery is the same as that of the original – if it is impossible to distinguish the forgery from the original work.
* Most contemporary philosophers believe that aesthetic value is based, at least in part, on the perceiver’s belief that a work is authentic. The psychological effect of knowing that an artwork is a forgery leads people to view it differently.